DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 228 444 CE 035 574

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TITLE Toward an Ergonomics of Adult Basic Education Instructor and Staff Development.
PUB DATE 12 Apr 83
NOTE 11p.; Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (67th, Montreal, Canada, April 12, 1983).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adult Basic Education; Human Factors Engineering; *Inservice Teacher Education; *Job Satisfaction; *Outcomes of Education; Self Actualization; *Teacher Attitudes; *Work Attitudes; Workshops
IDENTIFIERS Pennsylvania

ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to determine if more frequent adult basic education (ABE) teacher participation in inservice programs is related to greater job satisfaction or if such factors as age, sex, years of experience, or degree attainment and coursework in adult education play a greater role. A random sample of 150 ABE teachers in Pennsylvania was derived from lists from the state education department and professional associations. One hundred-twelve of these teachers (35 male and 77 female) returned a completed Hoppock's Job Satisfaction Blank and provided additional information on age, sex, years as an ABE teacher, years in current position, highest degree attained, degree specialization, amount of coursework in adult education, frequency of participation in inservice activities, and opinion of the quality of these activities. Analysis of the results indicated no significant differences for personal variables, although older respondents tended to indicate slightly higher levels of satisfaction. On the other hand, persons with less than 1 year in their current post reported significantly less job satisfaction than those with 9 or more years in the same job. Job satisfaction was lower among persons reporting their inservice training as useless than among those who rated it higher. There was also a slight but not significant tendency for job satisfaction to increase as participation in inservice training decreased. Implications of the study included the conclusion that increased participation in training is not a satisfier to all persons; some may prefer free time as a job benefit; and ABE teacher needs should be assessed rather than assumed. (KC)

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TOWARD AN ERGONOMICS OF ADULT BASIC EDUCATION INSTRUCTOR AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT

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paper read at

Annual Meeting of the
American Educational Research Association
Montreal

April 12, 1983

...I still feel hypocritical about my work....Yet there are things I feel pretty good about. I know there are students I've helped. I'm not sure I ever helped anyone when I was selling business machines or insurance.

ABE teacher Jack Currier, in Studs Turkel's, Working 1974)

*The author gratefully acknowledges suggestions about this study from Mr. James Hawking of the Chicago Urban Skills Institute

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TOWARD AN ERGONOMICS OF ADULT BASIC EDUCATION INSTRUCTOR AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Is more frequent ABE teacher participation in in-service programs related to greater job satisfaction? Or do such factors as age, sex, years of experience, or degree attainment and coursework in adult education play a greater role?

Research on job satisfaction, using diverse instruments and indices, has prominantly sampled groups ranging from allied health professionals and assembly line workers to college professors and elementary school teachers. Over the previous two decades, inquiry launched out from such theoretical bases as the "two-factor theory" of Herzberg et al. (1959) and Maslow's "needs hierarchy" (1943). While the former argued that inattentiveness to "extrensic" or "hygiene" factors led to dissatisfaction and that "intrinsic" factors or "motivators" (e.g., job advancement) enhanced satisfaction possibilities, the latter concentrated on needs differences among individual personalities, suggesting five plateaus of increasingly higher order needs requiring satisfaction in a more or less sequential fashion.

In spite of this base, some recent argument suggests that there is no unified theoretical base in job satisfaction research design, and that even among concrete manifestations of job satisfaction---performance, productivity, attitudes, and job stability---results of most research are not generalizable (Kollarik, 1975). Others note that most job satisfaction

research largely underestimates extrinsic sources of satisfaction (Nord, 1977) and that, whatever it is that instruments are measuring, it has not been the information needed to modify jobs in order to reduce employee frustration (Taylor, 1977). In other words, dominant research modes are alleged to be victims of the Type III error: measuring the wrong thing with the utmost precision (Mitroff, 1980).

Nonetheless, the preponderance of job satisfaction research indicates that 1) older workers express higher degrees of satisfaction, perhaps because they have a lower need for it (Buhmeyer & Hunt, 1982; Janson & Martin, 1982; Imbach & Steiner, 1981; Form & Geschwender, 1962); 2) sex is not an adequate predictor of job satisfaction (Lee, 1982; Ivancevich & Donnelly, 1968); and 3) while flexible scheduling, training, enhanced physical environment, and other innovations may improve such factors as workgroup relations and productivity, they do not necessarily impinge on expressed levels of job satisfaction (King, Murray, & Atkinson, 1982; Narayanan & Nath, 1982).

METHODOLOGY

Despite the diverse array of laboring groups targeted for such research, neither adult education professionals nor adults in traditional or non-traditional work/life transitions are reflected in usual samples. This study derived a random sample of 150 ABE teachers in Pennsylvania from lists provided by the state education department and professional association. Each teacher was asked to complete Hoppock's Job Satisfaction Blank (1935) and to provide additional information on age, sex, years

as an ABE teacher, years in current position, highest degree attained, degree specialization, amount of coursework in adult education, frequency of participation in in-service workshops, and opinion of the quality of those in-service activities. The Hoppock instrument was chosen because of ease in scoring, broad applicability to those with diverse occupational preparations, and strong reliability and validity measures (Crites, 1966).

Questionnaires were returned by 114 (76%) of the sample, and 112 (74.7%) were usable (two respondents reported themselves as no longer teaching). 35 respondents (31.25%) were male, while 77 (68.75%) were female, providing a sample population similar to other ABE teacher studies throughout the U.S. (National Advisory Council on Adult Education, 1974; Moore, 1979; Orem and Ulmer, 1980).

Findings

Employing one-way analysis of variance, each of the above-mentioned "demographic" items was compared to job satisfaction scores. Scheffe procedures indicated no significant differences (at the .05 level) between males and females, among five age groupings, among those with baccalaureate, masters, or doctorate degrees, between those with greater or lesser coursework in adult education, among those with degrees in areas more or less cogent to ABE (e.g., reading as opposed to art history), or among those with greater or lesser numbers of years as ABE teachers.

As in other studies (Mezirow, Darkenwald, & Knox, 1975), older respondents tended to indicate higher levels of satisfaction,

but differences were not significant at the .05 level.

Tables 1 and 2 represent areas of significant difference when comparing job satisfaction scores with groups indicating varying years of experience in their present jobs and with groups differing in perceptions of quality of in-service programs which they had attended. Table 1 shows that individuals with less than one year in their current post reported signicantly less job satisfaction ($P < .05$) than those with nine or more years in the same job. Table 2 reveals that job satisfaction levels among persons perceiving their in-service training experiences as useless were significantly lower ($P < .05$) than those scores of individuals rating in-service activities of little value, some value, or great value. Table 3 relates job satisfaction scores to frequency of participation in in-service activities. While score differences among groups indicating greater or lesser rates of participation were not significant at the .05 level, a slight tendency for job satisfaction to increase as participation decreases presents itself.

Discussion

Recent research in ergonomics (the study of people at work) indicates a trilateral relationship among performance, job satisfaction, and access to rewards, including opportunities for training and sraff development. Summarizing such findings, Hinrichs (1974, p. 99) argued that, "given a relatively open job market or mobility potential, the extent to which employees withdraw from their jobs...is related to the degree of satisfaction they derive from their work." Two important characteristics of the ABE instructor population influence applicability

TABLE 1

1-WAY ANOVA COMPARING JOB SATISFACTION SCORES WITH YEARS IN CURRENT JOB

	N	MEAN SCORE*	S.D.
LESS THAN 1 YEAR	5	15.80	6.98
1-3 YEARS	35	20.34	4.22
4-8 YEARS	48	20.79	3.62
9-14 YEARS	16	23.37	2.03
15+ YEARS	8	23.00	4.03

*Higher scores indicate higher job satisfaction

TABLE 2

1-WAY ANOVA COMPARING JOB SATISFACTION SCORES TO ASSESSMENT OF IN-SERVICE EXPERIENCES

	N	MEAN SCORE	S.D.
NO VALUE	17	16.00	5.37
LITTLE VALUE	29	20.76	3.41
SOME VALUE	40	22.25	2.78
MUCH VALUE	26	22.42	2.64

TABLE 3

1-WAY ANOVA COMPARING JOB SATISFACTION SCORES TO FREQUENCY OF PARTICIPATION IN IN-SERVICE PROGRAMS

NUMBER OF IN-SERVICE PROGRAMS PER YEAR	N	MEAN SCORE	S.D.
1*	23	21.74	3.06
2-3	75	20.77	4.42
4 or more	14	20.64	3.20

*All respondents reported attendance at at least one in-service program per year.

of such a finding to the ABE staff development milieu. First, over half of the respondents were part-time workers. This group ranged from those working a few hours per week to those in the 30-32 hour cluster over the same weekly period. These instructors often are attracted to their work by the flexibility and mobility which ABE "workplaces" currently afford. They may regard more frequent staff development programs, particularly those which are mandatory, as incursions upon a rich source of personal satisfaction: free time. Relatedly, over 40% of the respondents rated the quality of experienced in-service programs as worthless or poor. This group exhibited significantly lower job satisfaction scores than those respondents rating programs as generally good or excellent. The group of "low-sated low raters" may decline to perceive in-service/staff development activities as part of an intrinsic reward system. In Herzburg's terms (1959), extrensic factors must be employed to maintain a modicum of satisfaction, but they cannot be expected to increase

it. Needed concentration for that relies on intrinsic satisfiers, self-perceived opportunities to use and refine one's skill, or enhanced capacity to make one's own professional decisions and to take initiative (Herzberg, 1966; Verhaegen, 1979).

Increasingly ergonomic research detects job satisfaction as an outcome of effective performance, rather than a precondition to it, when the organization's reward system is closely gauged to employees' personal and professional goals. ABE instructors may need to sense access to staff development opportunities as part of the organizational reward structure, but some will view the hierarchical expectation to participate as a goal frustration.

A general limitation in such research efforts as this entails sample size, identifying actual instructors, and accounting for the ambiguities in many instructors' roles. Overall, however, with a mean score of 20.96, this sample was similar in satisfaction levels among professionals in other studies. Analysis of interrelationships among independent variables in this study and interstate/transnational comparisons might yield more instructive data. Nonetheless, it is hoped that this study might offer just a bit of caution to one assuming that job satisfaction, particularly for the newer instructor, can be augmented through in-service programming. Staff development exercises often are planned as though all teachers have the same needs (Tibbetts & Westby-Gibson, 1979); indeed, one frequently sees failure to extend to the instructor

the same chances to join in needs assessment with the frequency on which professionals insist when working with learners.

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